

Congresswoman Betty McCollum

Serving Minnesota's 4th Congressional District

1714 Longworth HOB ♦ Washington, DC 20515

www.mccollum.house.gov

ASBESTOS FACT SHEET

Asbestos is deadly

Asbestos is a naturally-occurring mineral that is used in construction and consumer products. Asbestos is a **known carcinogen**, and there is **no known safe level of exposure**. Asbestos fibers in the air can enter a person's lungs, where they cause scarring and can ultimately cause deadly cancer.

- Up to 10,000 Americans die each year from asbestos exposure. [Environmental Working Group, 2004]

Asbestos is legal today

Many Americans think asbestos was banned, but it wasn't. In 1989, the EPA tried to ban asbestos, but portions of those regulations were overturned in court in 1991.

- 40 countries have already banned asbestos. The U.S. has not.

Millions of Americans are exposed to asbestos, including:

- U.S. Military personnel - About one-third of mesothelioma victims were exposed to asbestos while serving in the U.S. Navy.
- Brake mechanics, roofers, cement workers, demolition workers
- Homeowners doing renovation projects. As many as 35 million homes and businesses may have insulation made with harmful minerals from Libby, Montana.
- Spouses and children of workers – who unknowingly bring home asbestos fibers on their clothing
- According to EPA, 27 million Americans had significant asbestos exposure on the job between 1940 and 1980.
- According to OSHA, "An estimated 1.3 million employees in construction and general industry face significant asbestos exposure on the job."

Asbestos exposure causes a variety of cancers

The most deadly asbestos disease is mesothelioma. Asbestos diseases usually do not manifest themselves until decades after a person is exposed to asbestos fibers, but then the diseases develop rapidly. Most patients with mesothelioma die within 1 year of being diagnosed.

Research and treatment options are inadequate

Far too little funding has been put into asbestos research over the past 10 years.

Therefore treatment options are years behind other forms of cancers.

A public education campaign is needed to protect Americans

- Workers don't know they are being exposed because products containing asbestos are poorly labeled or lack labels altogether.
- Family members are not informed of the deadly effects of asbestos fibers they are inadvertently exposed to by loved ones who work with asbestos.
- Residents of communities near river dredging spoils or old mining operations are not aware of the effects of asbestos in their midst.
- Those exposed to asbestos are not being made aware of the treatment options that are available to them.

In Minnesota...

In June of 2007, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that the Minnesota Department of Health had suppressed research about 35 new cases of mesothelioma among Iron Range miners who died of the asbestos-related cancer, for a year.

In response to concerns about the safety of mine dust, the University of Minnesota, along with health care providers, Minnesota state legislators, and community partners has initiated the Minnesota Taconite Workers Lung Health Partnership to provide a greater understanding of taconite workers health issues, study the causes of the increase in deaths to mesothelioma among taconite mine workers, and provide recommendations to limit risk to workers and their families.

Statistics

▶According to EPA, 27 million Americans had significant asbestos exposure on the job between 1940 and 1980. According to OSHA, "An estimated 1.3 million employees in construction and general industry face significant asbestos exposure on the job. Heaviest exposures occur in the construction industry, particularly during the removal of asbestos during renovation or demolition. Employees are also likely to be exposed during the manufacture of asbestos products (such as textiles, friction products, insulation, and other building materials) and during automotive brake and clutch repair work."

▶EPA has estimated as many as 3,000 consumer products were once made with asbestos.

▶Contaminated material from the Libby mine was shipped to more than 300 sites around the country for processing. The EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry have determined 14 of these sites including Spokane, Washington, are still so contaminated that they need to be cleaned up. The Libby mine closed in 1990.

▶Waste rock from asbestos contaminated mines and plants was distributed across the country. The rock at one Minneapolis site contained between 2 and 10 percent tremolite asbestos and produced airborne asbestos concentrations 135 times higher than OSHA's current standard for workers.

▶As many as 35 million homes and businesses may have insulation made with harmful minerals from Libby.

▶In 2001, the U.S. consumed 26 million pounds of asbestos in the form of roofing products, gaskets, brakes and other products.

▶Asbestos has been banned in more than 40 countries, but not in the United States.